

RIT Institute Writing Committee (IWC) Progress Report for Academic Year 2012-2013

IWC Web Page: <http://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/academicssenate/iwc/>

Institute Writing Committee (IWC) Membership (2012-2013)

Faculty Representatives: Richard Zanibbi (Chair, GCCIS); Laurie Dwyer (SCB); Clark Hochgraf (CAST); Pamela Kincheloe (NTID); Carl Lutzer (COS); Matthew Marshall (KGCOE); Eric Nystrom (CLA); Sarah Thompson (CIAS); Nancy Valentage (CHST)

Ex Officio Members: David Martins (Director, University Writing Program); Heidi Miller (Senate representative); Andrew Perry (Director, Writing Center); Phillippa Powers (Director, Academic Support Center); Stan Van Horn (Director, English Language Center) Dianna Winslow (Director, First Year Writing Program)

Overview

During the 2012-2013 academic year, the Institute Writing Committee focused on developing procedures for approving courses submitted for Writing Intensive (WI) status, and making decisions about WI status for submitted courses. The committee provided feedback to instructors regarding the role of writing in their WI courses, and any opportunities to strengthen their courses' alignment with the Writing Policy.

Institute Writing Committee Charges

The following charges are taken from the document *Proposed Senate Charges for AY 2012-2013* that was distributed at the first Academic Leadership meeting held in fall 2012. Each charge, along with a summary of the committee's response is provided below.

1. Report on and provide recommendations to the Senate resulting from last year's charges.

This report includes recommendations for next academic year, and constitutes the committee's response to this charge.

2. Review and approve new writing intensive courses.

At the time of this writing, the committee has reviewed 97 requests for Writing Intensive (WI) course designation. Of those, 72 courses have been approved as Writing Intensive:

First-Year: 3

GenEd: 45

Program: 24

Any courses submitted for WI status after May 3, 2013 (Friday of Week 9 for the 2012-2013 academic year) will be considered in Fall 2013. All requests received before May 3rd will be evaluated before the end of the academic year.

3. Define outcomes and document assessment procedures for Writing Intensive Courses.

The WI course approval procedure has been published on the IWC web site:
<http://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/academic senate/iwc/submission.php>

Instructors of a proposed Writing Intensive course submit a one-page Course Criteria Checklist (CCC) form through MyCourses for consideration by the committee at their weekly meetings. **Instructors must identify at least one writing-related learning outcome for a proposed WI course.**

Possible outcomes of a CCC evaluation for a proposed WI course are 1) Accept, 2) Accept subject to Revisions, and 3) Decline. During weekly meetings the committee evaluates submitted CCC forms, with notes taken of any concerns. The chair and Writing Program Director then submit a written response to the instructor on behalf of the committee through MyCourses.

The collection and assessment of CCC forms required significant effort: developing the MyCourses shell used to collect CCC forms, refining the CCC form, and conversations by the chair, Writing Director, and other committee members with instructors throughout the institute.

4. Work with the General Education Committee to develop procedures to coordinate the approval of general education writing intensive courses.

The chair had a conversation and exchanged email with George Zion (chair, General Education Committee) regarding this matter, and determined that the approval of General Education and Writing Intensive courses would be carried out by the IWC and GenEd committees independently of one another.

Additional Activities

The committee met weekly throughout 2012-2013. Below is a summary of additional activities completed by the committee this past academic year.

1. We held numerous discussions looking at the relationship between the Institute Writing Policy, and what best practices need to be adopted to successfully implement the policy.
2. IWC representatives spoke with deans, chairs and instructors in order to provide and collect information, and to assist instructors with completing CCC forms.

3. The chair and University Writing Program director contacted deans and department chairs to identify which WI-proposed courses will have CCC forms submitted for them, and to collect information enrollment information for previous offerings of WI candidate courses.
4. Updated example CCC forms on the IWC web site:

<http://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/academicsenate/iwc/>

The updated forms state writing-related learning outcomes in standard assessment language, emphasizing acquired skills versus tasks completed during a course (e.g. "Student will be able to identify..." vs. "Students will write a paper where...")

5. The committee estimated the number of GenEd WI course seats needed to provide a working steady state. Assuming freshman class sizes of 2600 students per year, the committee estimates that the same number of seats (2600) are needed each academic year, taking into account that students will likely satisfy their WI requirement at different points in their studies.
6. Discussion of this report and proposed charges for 2013-2014.

Recommendations and Proposed Charges for 2013-2014

The committee has one policy recommendation.

1. **Policy recommendation:** Students should complete First Year Writing (Writing Seminar or other so-designated WI courses) by the end of their first year. Students should take one WI course in general education by the end of their third year. Students must pass a First Year Writing course prior to enrolling in a Program-WI course. Students must be able to complete WI requirements within the existing graduation requirements.

For next year, we propose the following charges.

1. Present a proposal for a WI course enrollment cap at Academic Senate. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) makes the following recommendation regarding standard class sizes for English instructors at the college level (source: www.ncte.org/positions/statements/classsizecollege):

"No more than 20 students should be permitted in any writing class. Ideally, classes should be limited to 15. Students cannot learn to write without writing. In sections larger than 20, teachers cannot possibly give student writing the immediate and individual response necessary for growth and improvement."
2. Continue to evaluate courses submitted for WI designation.
3. Develop guidelines and procedures for assessing WI courses that have been taught in the classroom. This will include discussions about guidelines and procedures for WI

course assessment common to programs across the institute, and methods for assessing the extent to which the WI program is successful across the institute.

4. Discuss available resources for WI courses, WI course instructors, and writing in general, and identify opportunities to support the Institute Writing Policy. The development and support of the Writing Fellows program (i.e. student/peer writing assistants) is a key matter related to this charge.
5. *(Revised charge from current academic year)* Work with the General Education Committee to determine whether the General Education and Institute Writing Policy can be satisfied by students through existing course offerings. The committees should also explore the extent to which these two curricular frameworks are compatible and can be successfully implemented.

Summary

The IWC was successful in meeting its charges this year. Some programs have been late in submitting CCC forms, but in many cases this is for Program courses that will not be taken by students for another year or more, and we do not anticipate any significant disruptions as a result of this. The process for submitting and approving courses for WI status is now well-defined and efficient.

We imagine that next year the committee will continue to review courses submitted for WI designation, consider methods for assessing the degree to which the Institute Writing Policy has been implemented effectively, and identify resources and opportunities for enhancing writing instruction for RIT undergraduates.